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MEMOIRS

BY

SYED HOSAIN BILGRAMI.

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Beata Victoria!

Mother of men ! nay, by what sweeter name

Can we invoke thee in our prayer ? For Fame

Is but a giftless almoner of thine,

Until thou fill his hand with gifts divine,

Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Supreme of woman-kind, supreme in all

Thy sex's highest sanctities ! No call

Of Queenly duty light or heavy-laid

Might find thy dauntless woman's heart afraid,

Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

All gifts were thine—all trials too that chasten,
Uplift, ennoble, for none might stay or hasten
God's hand : thine too all homely joys, and glories
Of war or peace that live in deathless stories,
Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Thy triumphs are all merciful : not as
Imperial Rome, oft flaunting to the gaze
Of crowds debauched with god-less sights and games,
A captive nation's ills and cruel shames,
Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Thy casket held far other gifts than erst
Pandora's. Hers of lurid fire accurst,
But thine, Victoria ! came on angel wings
Blazoned with Heaven's own radiant quarterings,
Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Which of thy gifts was highest none may know :
But surely Heaven's fore-knowledge would bestow
Fortitude first for hours of straitest trial,
Most nobly borne in lifelong self-denial,
Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Wisdom came next with balanced self-control

Controlling worlds regenerate. Thy soul

Is law to souls, thy mind to other minds,

And so thy rule a mighty empire binds,

Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

When alien lands, not alien now, were given,

Great realms for which great kings had striven,

He gave thee Clemency—an added grace,

With equal love Who loveth every race,

Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Thy lieges, legions in this land and sea

Swayed by the sun in fealty to thee,

Turn them for help and succour to the west

Where faith and hope at last have found a rest,

Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Oh ! that my country could behold thy face

And carved brow, wherein is queenly grace

Woven with web of many-tangled care,

Pale with high thought, but kind and debonair,

Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Once stood I in thy presence, even I
Thy bondman, and beheld thy majesty ;
Bent my knee in service ; heard thee speak
Kindly accents, and spoke back in rev'rence meek,
Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Oh ! may thy life be long for us, great one !
And when in God's own time thy work is done,
Then may thy many-dowered mantle fall
From son to gifted son in slow recall,
Great Mother—Empress—Queen !

Uncertain Harmonies

There is a charm that silence wields

 In sylvan solitudes,

Where twilight dwells enthroned in leafy bowers,

And blossoms drop like dew in golden showers,

 A music that preludes

Sweet songs, perchance rehearsed in fair Elysian fields.

By far off sweeps of yonder stream

 And reaches verdurous,

Where trees foregather round a pool embayed,

While at their feet is oft a breeze delayed

 For frolics venturous

In the cool depth below where shadows lie and dream.

Or in some Himalayan grove

Of redolent deodár,

And gnarled oak and rhododendron red,

With tawny moss and fern well garmented,

While marshalled not afar

Watch veteran peaks of snow that seem to live and move.

And on the velvet, piled beneath

By many an autumn's spoil,

Empurpled shadows glancing to and fro

Hold in the glinting sun a fairy show,

Wherein a living coil

Of teeming gems is disentangled on the heath.

Here haply once a Rishi dwelt

Favoured of mighty Brahm,

Close comrade long of rock, and snow and storm,

Familiar friend of every forest form,

In contemplation calm

Of God's pervading sense in all he saw or felt,

And haply many an autumn night

Ere winter storms began,

Behind yon copse he watched the eastern skies,

And darkling saw the lambent planet rise,

Behold her fingers wan

Transfuse a dismal world with circumambient light.

Or where in faint remembrance of

A half forgotten dream,

With borrowed blooms and skill of light and shade

Man has, perchance, a feigned Eden made

By some still lake or stream,

Where spring may dwell a passing day and waste his love.

Here in such spots of God's fair earth

Away from jarring strife,

Some favoured soul, though prisoned, still may hear

Faint far off echoes of another sphere

Where spirits sing of life

Informed with love divine of pure celestial birth.

As erst the Broad-browed Grecian knew ;

Or he that heard the stars

Sing like an angel, in their orbits dim

"Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim" ;

Or the blind bard of Mars ;

Or Nature's pontiff-priest who wore the laurelled brow.

These heard it--these and other seers

And singers of all time,

And steeped their souls in harmony divine,

And drinking deep of that ethereal wine

Broke forth in strains sublime

Of prayer or praise or love to bless unending years.

It hath uncertain harmonies

Tuned to the listner's mood :

Now sad as is the sigh of dying wave,

And now with joy's omnipotence to save

Despairing souls that brood

In darkening hours of life o'er Fate's funereal seas.

England and India

I

England ! 'tis meet that or for weal or woe,
In calm or storm, our chosen place should be
Where honor calls us by the side of thee,
Thy friend be friend to us, our bitt'rest foe
The trait'rous knave who schemes thy overthrow :
For like to Israel in captivity,
We once were thralls till thou didst set us free
And give us peace unknown from long ago.

Aye, peace unknown ! when we were sore bestead,
And greivous were the burdens that we bore ;
But now if peace there be and rest divine,
Good will 'tween men and peace, and all that's bred
Thereof when lawless might is feared no more,
To thee we owe them all, these gifts are thine.

II

And we have shared thy travail and thy toil,
And followed thee to feast and fray, and done
Thy bidding, and our stalwart sons have gone
Death-ward for thee in many an evil broil,
And with their blood have moistened many a soil,
Rearing thy dauntless banner in the sun,
And flank to flank with thee much glory won,
To thy bright crown a not unworthy foil.

Nay judge not harshly, England ! if there be
That think not coward shame to rend their troth
With treason's bodkin, an unworthy crew
Shackled in heart, though thou hast set them free,
Whose valour weareth out in wordly froth :
Forgive them all, they know not what they do.

Triplets

Even as the flowers are, so art thou,
Bright and sweet and joyous,
Maiden of the sunny brow!

Even as the morn is, so art thou,
Fresh is the virgin dew
Upon thy golden brow.

Even as the stars are, so art thou,
The poetry of heaven is
Under thy archèd brow.

Even as the soul is, so art thou,
And love and life and light
Are circled round thy brow.

Green bank of grass and maiden hair
 Wound round a purling brook
 In summer, is 'pas ing fair :

Where roses climb half way
 To trellised jessamine,
 Soothing the sultry day ;

And showered blooms of *Vakul** spread
 Beneath, and yellow *Champa*,†
 Blithe Spring's own bridal bed,

'Tis ever sweet ; but sweeter then
 And fairer, aye, and rarer,
 Maiden of the golden brow !

Do I love thee ? Ask not again :
 The stars above thee answer yes,
 And the flowerful plain.

* *Mimusops Elengi* (Hindi *Maulsiri*).

† *Michelia Champaca*.

Sonnet

I doubt if Heav'n has anything more fair,
Nothing on earth is half so fair as she,
Or sweet, or half so warm, or womanly.
Not in Sicilian plains, or far Cashmere,
Hesperian fields, or blue-viewed Nilgiri,
Bloomed bud, or ripened fruit of richer hue
Than on her sunny face and forehead free.
No lethal weapons in her armoury
She keeps, or barbed words of gall and rue;
But kindly wit, and "eyes" of heavenly blue
For winged glances; witching smiles for friends,
With many a nameless way of winning them.
On her chaste bosom glistens not a gem,
Her precious woman's heart makes rare amends.

Sonnet

Of powers on earth, that make or mar man's life
Is chiefest woman. Conscience, honour, truth,
Ambition, love of peace or love of strife,
Religion, chance that comes when life is smooth
And turns its course awry, or fear of death,
Are all most potent arms of destiny ;
But woman crowns them all. From her a breath,
A tone or token, touch, or glance of eye
O'ermasters all. O ! Woman ! thou art Fate
Without Fate's blindness. Not divine art thou,
Yet surely nearest God in form and state
Of all his works.

And when He carved thy brow,
Sweet friend, and lit thine eyes with light of day
He shed on thee his most divinest ray.

Old Year

Year ! old year ! fast fading year !
Hast thou no word to say, no dying word,
Between the gloaming and the gloom
Of thy sad doom ?
Or is the poor, frail, failing voice unheard,
Unseen the wan, weak tear ?
Year ! old year !

Year ! old year ! fast fading year !
Eternity was once in fierce travail,
And Fate of all things most forlorn
Ere time was born :
Did not her primal agonised wail
Pierce thine unborn ear ?
Year ! old year !

Year ! old year ! fast fading year !

When from the shoreless sea rolled one more wave

World-ward, and the Lord knew 'twas thou,

Upon thy brow,

Scrawled He the gaunt old legend of the grave,

In foam-slakes dank and drear ?

Year ! old year !

Year ! old year ! fast fading year !

Was thy last sun not pale for pity's sake

Or love's ? Nay ! gliding elsewhere,

O'er marsh or mere,

Glanced he not back upon his wasteful wake,

Or shed a wistful tear ?

Year ! old year !

Year ! old year ! poor, lost old year !

Thy knell is tolling now ; the tale is told

Of thy brief days ; thy life is done

With scarce goal won :

Time claims his dead, and lays thee stark and cold

Upon his misty bier,

Year ! old year !

Year ! old year ! poor dead old year !

Thy face was comely once, thy voice once sweet

To hear, and once athwart thy brow,

Not dark as now,

Shone glow-worm gleams of hope, some flashes fleet

Of joy that came not near !

Year ! old year !

Nay, what was thy message, year?
Of old leaves withered, or of new loves gone?
Of Joy that will not tarry long?
Or of sweet song
Silenced ere half the singing time is done?
Or of dead hope and sore?
Year! old year!

Yea, thy fruit, thou sped old year,
Was dead-sea fruit sprung of salt ooze, and fed
On bitter gall and bitt'rer rue;
Whereof the hue
Was death; whereof the taste was molten lead,
Cold ash, or frozen tear.
Year! old year!

Butterfly and Moth

A pansy-pinioned butterfly,
Flitting from rose to mignonette,
Espied a moth on wings to him
To where an open casement met
The dusking day with timid light,
That ev'ry minute grew more bright.

Said butterfly to moth in jest,
"What wings you, cousin, on your way?
The sun is all but gone to rest:
They tarry now who tarry may,
For flowers here are sweet to see,
And sweeter still for company."

But here the busy trifer spied,
Ere half his jesting speech was done,
A tall white lily by the side
Of a steep bank that kissed the sun ;
And fitted forth incontinent,
On ever-changing pleasure bent.

The moth scarce seemed to heed the song,
But sped demurely on his way,
As one impelled by purpose strong
Whom way-side trifles might not stay ;
Till past the curtained casement frame,
With deathless love he fed the flame.

But ere his life was half consumed,
I seemed to here some murmuring,
As of a soul to silence doomed
(Though Death for him was left of sting)
Who still would voice his inmost pain,
And would not make his passion vain.

That sweet sad wail no mortal ear,
Though kindred passion give it name,
May in the body ever hear,
For singeing wing and hissing frame—
Burnt-offerings of steadfast love
On the high altar reared above.

With inward sense he sees the light,

He feels it in his inmost soul :

He finds it fair, he knows it bright :

He seeks it for his destined goal :

Welcome to him the chattering fire,

For love is one with love's desire.

Shall love at love's hand seek for good

Alone—soft sun-shine and sweet shade ;

And way-side blooms ; and blithe abode

In yonder smiling valley-glade ;

Smooth paths that will caress the feet ;

Sweet wines to drink, sweet food to eat ?

Shall love at love's hand wince or cry,
If e'er frosts sting, or hot suns smite;
And bitter tears that bite the eye
Well up unbid ; and aches that write
Strange wrinkles on the anguished heart,
Swart galley-marks that ne'er depart ?

Go to ! thy creed is wearisome.
Nay ! may not love once smite for love ?
Is travail vain ? Do trials come
In wrath alone ? Nay ! up above,
Thy fire and light, thy wrath and ruth,
Are witnesses of one same truth.

Say which clays sconeest—light or fire,

The sun speeds swiftest or the day ?

Why need the fearless heart enquire

If wrath may quicken, ruth may slay,

When faith and hope are given to love,

And all consecrated above ?

A voice calls ! and the exiled soul

Rejoicing, answers back—" I come ! "

What boots it how the goal is won,

The way was long and wearisome,

The way was long, and bleak and strait,

And 'twas an agony to wait.

An unsung Idyll in his life,
The little fragile moth reveals,
The primal lay of mortal strife
To win the light that death conceals :
And dying thus he leaves behind,
A burning message for his kind.

THREE SONNETS**I****Dawn**

When my Queen was first garlanded with light
Of luscious womanhood and harmony
Of soft, down curving lineaments, her eye
Yet lacked the gleam of lurking fire; the fright
Of vague desire was yet unknown delight;
And eye-lids drooped not yet with hesitancy.
But when love came at last with conscious might,
She stood a goddess in her majesty.

Love came at last, the crown of all her grace
And loveliness. I knew it by the gleam
Of a strange light in her eye, and in her face
The flush as of some happy waking dream:
A most bewitching shyness came apace,
To be my agony and joy supreme.

II

Storm

And with the dawn of love there came the time,
When lives thus intertwined are lived in fierce
Relation momentarily. Unskilled to pierce
The crust of strange emotion, or to climb
With scatheless steps up the huge steeps sublime
Of passion, doubts would come to us, and tears
Of jealous rage to sink us in the slime
Of dank despair, and slough of secret fears.

Not often. Love had days informed with life
Intense. World-ignorant, in sooth, we were;
Haply heart-ignorant; we dared explore
Love's utmost reaches, guideless in the strife
With new desires; nor feared to brave the stir
Of rolling waves on passion's restless shore.

III Calm

"After a storm cometh a calm"—so says
The proverb. From the crucible of pain
Our love rose pure of dross. Melted in rain
Were now the threatening clouds of former days :
Nor did the genial sun withhold his rays.
Would we not wish to live those days again ?
I know not. Ask those wounded in forays :
"He jests at scars"—I miss the old refrain.

And yet. And yet the storm, they say, hath power
To please, and clouds a beauty of their own ;
And the wild buffeting of winds is known
To give delight to some, when storm-racks lower,
And on the wind-ward strand are foam-flakes blown
From angry surging seas in a misty shower.

A Child's first knowledge of death

I

The haunting records of a far off clime,
Conned through the mist of years bring back to me
One dread dark night of sleepless memory,
When all the spectral silence of the time,
And strange house-noises of a ghastly chime,
And huge waves swashing on a view-less lea,
And high winds soughing in a feath'ry tree,
To my awed ears intoned a most weird rhyme.

And in a well-known bed, a well-known face
Waked not but slept, and all the house was hushed.
And through the slow-drawn horrors of the night
The dear-bought knowledge of his fallen race,
On the distraught child's throbbing fancy rushed,
With fearful sense of Death's imperious might.

II

Day dawned at length without surcease of pain
And dazed bewilderment. The child half saw,
Half guessed mysterious rites with piteous awe ;
But missed their dire portent ; he missed the chain
That linked events ; scarce felt the primal stain
Inevitable ; scarce perceived the law
That must each life in swift progression draw,
For dread fulfilment, down th'abysmal main.

That fateful day and many days thereafter,
Were blurred to the child's eye with mist of tears
Unshed, or shed with ill-simulated laughter,
Lest loving hearts should guess forbidden fears.
The ache abode with knowledge half attained :
It was despair when certitude was gained.

Song

O! sweet was love and sweet desire,
And love's young blood was all a-fire,
And *is* knew not the dread to *be*,
When last my love came home to me.

The sun was sifted mellow in
The casement starred with jessamine,
And on the glass-pano buzzed the bee,
When last my love came home to me.

And roses red as martyr-wound,
Were on the trellis-shed festooned ;
Blue-bells hung from every tree,
When last my love came home to me.

And larkspurs on the way-side grew,
And poppies pearled with silver dew,
Pink passions made them flowers three,
When last my love came home to me.

I took from love close kisses three,
One kiss for love and one for thee,
And one for way-side company,
When last my love came home to me.

I took from love close kisses seven,
Some were for Hell, and some for Heaven,
And some for the thing that was to be,
When last my love came home to me.

Song

I met love walking on the heath

Wearily,

His foot was swart with clotted gore

From stinging woods beneath :

And walking he made moan,

Ah me !

And when he clomb upon the hill,

Wearily,

The wild wind smote him on the mouth,

And his sore heart was chill.

He was alone, alone,

Ah me !

He stood and looked at the cold, cold sea

Wearily,

The sea will kiss the rock, he said,

But it will kiss not me.

Alas ! so fair, so far !

Ah me !

At nightfall when he groped about

Wearily !

The shingle bruised his hand and knee :

And in his heart was doubt,

And in the heaven no star,

Ah Me !

April in Upper India

1

The west wind moaned among the trees,
The sad leaves shook and fell,
The distant murmur of the bees
Came faintly down the dell.
Love lay among his wasted flowers ;
Love sighed and sang—"the day is long,"
Time laughed and would not hear the song.

2

The dapple shadow of the leaves
Lay trembling on the grass ;
Upon the yellow stacked sheaves
There watched nor bud nor lass.
Love strayed among his fallen bowers ;
Love moaned and sang—"the day is long ;"
Time laughed and would not hear the song.

3

Lazily sped the long hot day,

The dust was in the wind ;

Beyond, the burning breath of May ;

The sweets of March behind :

Love grew weary of the hours ;

Love pined and sang—"the day is long ;"

Time laughed and would not hear the song.

4

The fierce sun shimmered on the land,

The birds their nests forsook ;

The hot wind quivered on the sand

That marged the dying brook :

Love languished vainly for his mate ;

Love sighed and sang—"the day is long ;"

Time laughed and would not hear the song.

5

His mate came with the brief springtide,
 With springtide she was gone,
 His mate came home when far and wide
 The sweets of March were strewn ;
 But now the land lay desolate ;
 Love moaned and sang—"the day is long ;"
 Time laughed and would not hear the song.

6

Fair *Jamuna* ! thy limpid plain
 Where laved the village maids
 Of *Brij* (whose garments once their swain
 Purloined)—lay in braids
 Of glist'ning sand, and feath'ry reeds :
 Love sighed and sang—"the day is long ;"
 Time laughed and would not hear the song.

The *lāla** stalks lay sere and wan,

And woeful blew the breeze ;

And bloomless drooped the *najman*,†

And cheerless stood the trees.

Love sickened with the day's long pains ;

Love sang—"the day is very long ;"

Time laughed and would not hear the song.

* Lapp.

† Lail pur.

Sonnet

(An unhappy woman on her birthday).

It may be six and twenty summers since
My mother's life and mine from one grew twin,
It may be more : I loath to note the train
Of rolling time. From meanest clown to prince
Of high degree the cycling years avince
Some chance or change to all—pleasure, or pain,
Joy, grief, now grief, now joy, or hope or fear,
Or love. But not for me from year to year
A change of lot or life brings this sad day.
Grief turned to stone, tears froze in polar ice,
Sighs changed to moaning echo in the vale,
Were fitter emblem than the flowers gay
And blithesome, or these other gifts of price
From faithful friends unconscious of my tale.

IN MEMORIAM

*C. K. L.***Oblit. 16-8-94**

Weep, weep poor child ! poor stricken child !
Thine eyes have need of welling tears ;
Brief months have been for thee as years :
He sleeps who late had fondly smiled,

Gazed fondly at thy up-turned face,
To read the welcome in thine eyes—
Cerulean as our summer skies,
And pure as is a thing of grace.

Aye, sleeps : and he will wake no more :
But summer skies will still be clear :
And when the rain comes in mid-year,
Brooks will run and torrents roar :

Between the tombstones grass will grow,
Flowers in fields and thriving corn ;
And trees late of their brav'ry shorn
By autumn, make a braver show :

Many a moon will wax and wane,
And thou wilt mark her fickle race ;
But he that sleeps with tranquil face,
Will not, can not wake again.

Call him fond names by love held dear ;
Put thy heart's passion in thine eyes :
Alas ! the stricken can not rise ;
He will not see, he will not hear.

What were his days that they should fail ?
What was thy love that it should haste—
A dainty garden all laid waste
By sudden blast of sleet and hail.

A lily in the valley grow,
A pure white lily tall and fair—
A gem that grows not everywhere ;
A ray that takes not every hue.

A little lamb of speckless white
Marked by the shepherd for his own,
And petted when the day was done,
A lamb that might be lamb or sprite.

These were but yesterday: Today
I see the lily pale and sere,
I see and weep a silent tear,
For grief that will not pass away.

Was it a wolf that scared the lamb—
A grim, grey wolf with hungry maw ?
The lamb lies bleeding on the straw,
Between the stricken sire and dam.

* * * * *

One holds the world is all askew :
 One that the fittest will survive,
 None other : one that we who live
 Will die. Oh God ! If these be true.

* * * * *

Mark yonder pile of built up fire :
 Nay, stray not near it as you go ;
 No living thing may brook its glow,
 Consuming as a funeral pyre.

A little while, and fingers left
 With toil and tools of simple make
 From out the flames a cracible take,
 And lo ! 'tis gold that fills the rest :

Aye, yellow gold, but chastened much ;
 Gold free of dross or base alloy,
 Purged by a fire that might destroy
 An element of flimsier touch.

* * * * *

Not vainly was the human soul
Made kin to sorrow from its birth,
That so its elemental worth
Be chastened for the Heavenly goal.

Is not God's pity sweet to have
And sweet to hold ! If this be so,
Then too is sorrow sweet to know,
Sweet for the spirit that is brave.

Out of the fire thy soul may rise
God-helped to purer, holier life ;
And memory of a by-gone strife
Be held a portion and a prize.

God's cunning hand we cannot tell :
He has a salve for broken hearts ;
And though the wounded surface smarts
In His own way He makes it well.

Peace, then my child ! Nay wipe thy tears :
Listen to the Healer's voice aloft :
He speaks in accents tender-soft :
Listen, for he that hearkens hears.

A Dream of Youth

Methought I dreamt a dream,
Delicious, sense-enthraling,
That one, forsooth may deem
Was come of Heaven's own calling.

The joys of life were there,
Such joys as never pall,
And all of earth or air
Seemed beautiful withal.

The joy that beamed within me
Shone mirrored all about,
And my notes of ecstasy
Were echoed with a shout.

Each phase of smiling nature
To me was full of glee :
With every living creature
My heart had sympathy.

Each tiny little flower
 In garden, sward or heath,
Aye! every blade of clover
 With nought but joy did breathe.

In every rustic maiden
 I saw a thousand charms,
With homely virtues laden
 Worthy my loving arms.

And nought of vice or failing
 Peopled my vision world ;
No sorrow, no bewailing
 Was ever seen or heard.

And "always to be blessed "
 Was not the lot of man,
For blessing I confessed
 O'erflowed our mortal span.

In such a world methought
 I lived and had my being,
 Where faith was sold nor bought,
 Where seeing was believing.

And then there came a waking
 My happy dream was gone ;
 The shadows of my making
 All vanished one by one.

Alas ! it was no dream
 But stern reality,
 The type of what I deem
 Youth's ideality.

On lightning wings it came
 On lightning wings 'twas gone :
 Youth is an empty name
 The blushes of a dawn,